



FEBRUARY 2022



SUBCOMMITTEE Updates

TRAINING

Co-Chairs: Jasper Marino (they/them), ESD and Marika Barto (she/her), OMWBE

Our committee has finalized content and is beginning to launch a training that will focus on respectfully working with transgender and non-binary customers. Pilot trainings are beginning now and are open for general registration in March.

In addition to this, we are piloting a shorter training on pronouns that we hope to have available in late March or April. We're still building content for our next training around LGBTQ+ history in the U.S. and creating a RAIN train-the-trainer program. Visit our new training [webpage](#) for more information.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Co-Chairs: Justin Taylor (he/him), L&I and Natasha Holt (she/her), DOC

2022 has arrived and RAIN's Communication and Outreach (C&O) team is hard at work lining up guest speakers, finalizing new digital outreach products, planning virtual events, and cranking out snazzy newsletters (like the one you're reading)!

We're always looking for new folks to join our committee – including at the leadership level! If you're interested in learning more about the work we do in C&O, don't hesitate to reach out to the interim co-chair: Justin.Taylor@Lni.wa.gov.

SUBCOMMITTEE Updates

SAFE PLACE

Co-Chairs: Jacob Towle (he/him), DSHS and Beth Barron (she/her), DSHS

We continue to improve the Safe Place program. In addition to ongoing coordination with the LGBTQ+ Commission, we are reaching out to those identified as partners, to get a better understanding of their thoughts or plans for continued operations. We have also discussed reimagining what Safe Place looks and feels like, as we move forward. We are thankful to all involved and are excited for continued discussions and next steps.

BEST PRACTICES

Co-Chairs: Ariel Kay (she/he), ESD and Haley Roady (she/her), UW

Best Practices has been busy working away on two big package recommendations. The first is around family structures and how that relates to our community in so many ways. We take a deep dive into FMLA and family leave policies that have unfairly marginalized the LGBTQ+ and other communities. The second is a toolkit for transitioning in the workplace that will consist of resources and best practices for HR professionals, supervisors and managers, and employees.

We are proud to announce that we have published an FAQ document for [adding pronouns into your signature line](#). This document can be used as a standard resource on the subject and linked to your pronouns in your signature line. Visit our [website](#) for more information.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

HOSTED BY
BUILD HISTORY & ACTIVITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

**THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 17TH, 2022**
9:00 AM TO NOON
VIRTUAL – ZOOM

Theme:
American Healthcare
for the Underserved
African-American
Community

Accessibility services are available upon request. Please contact Charleen Anderson, @anderc3@dshs.wa.gov

PLATFORM: ZOOM
REGISTRATION LINK:
[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/969768274?pwd=UNQ0CWO2SHZMBFJZVHCRNWWRAKN2QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/969768274?pwd=UNQ0CWO2SHZMBFJZVHCRNWWRAKN2QT09)



SANKOFA
"To Go Back and Get It"

VISUALLY, SANKOFA IS EXPRESSED AS A BIRD THAT FLIES FORWARD WHILE LOOKING BACKWARD WITH AN EGG IN ITS MOUTH. THE EGG SYMBOLIZES THE FUTURE. IT TEACHES US THAT WE MUST GO BACK TO OUR ROOTS IN ORDER TO MOVE FORWARD.



Visit our website

[Buildwa.org](https://buildwa.org)



RAIN GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

February 17, 2022

Featuring special guest speaker

Dr. Marcus Anthony Hunter

SAVE THE DATE!



Dr. Marcus Anthony Hunter is the Scott Waugh Endowed Chair in the Division of the Social Sciences, Professor of sociology and African American Studies at UCLA.

He is the coiner of #BlackLivesMatter, author of four books including *Radical Reparations* (forthcoming with HarperCollins/Amistad, Fall 2022), and co-founder of the U.S. Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Movement.



2:30-3:30 PM

Zoom Webinar Registration Link:

https://ofm-wa-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7AANLT-uQCeVKKwvQTE3lw

REMEMBERING Ruth Ellis

by Ashly McBunch (they/them), COM

The people I admire tend to be those who have lived authentically. Individuals of all genders, backgrounds, and experiences whose hearts, minds, and souls embrace the world around them and show such a remarkable spark that it radiates years after they have left this physical plane. Ruth Ellis was an example of that type of human being and her legacy lives on today.

Born in 1899 in Springfield, Illinois, Ruth Ellis came out as a lesbian at the age of 16. Ellis received her high school diploma as a black, gay woman when less than seven percent of African Americans graduated from secondary school. In 1937, she and her partner, Ceciline “Babe” Franklin, moved to Detroit, Michigan. There, they spent 34 years together, and Ellis became the first African American woman to own an offset printing business. The years of being a business owner inspired the couple to turn their home into the “Gay Spot” in the early 70s. A safe place where young black gays and lesbians who were rejected by white gay clubs and black straight clubs could have a friendly and open nightclub environment. In addition to being an entrepreneur, Ellis was an activist for African Americans, senior citizens, and LGBTQ communities. Due to her work assisting black lesbians with researching their history, she proposed a version of Big Brothers/Sisters. The program would consist of a community of younger gays and lesbians matched as social companions with gay and lesbian seniors with related interests. She also supported those who needed books, food, or assistance with college tuition.

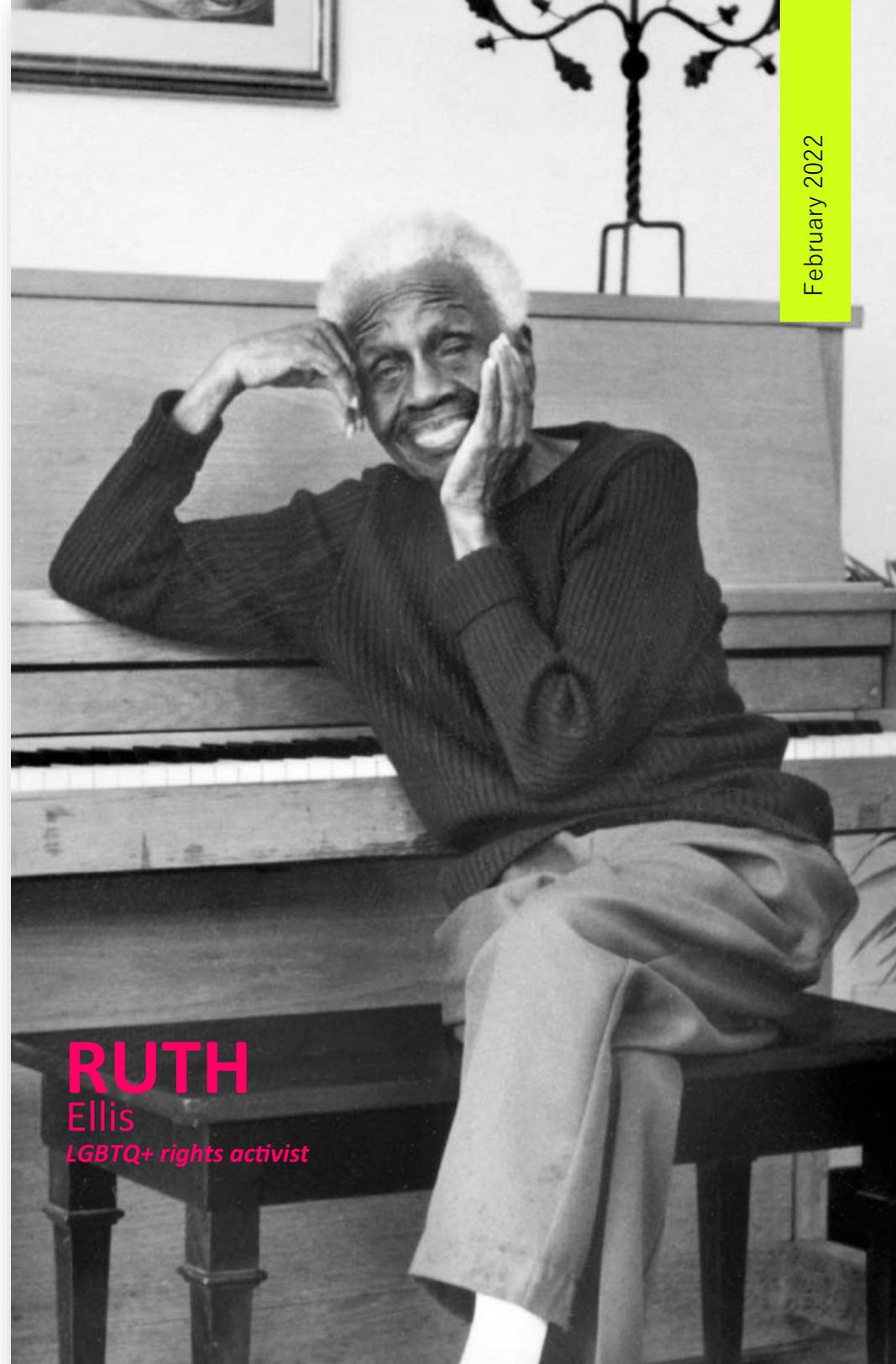
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A friend of Ellis', Kofi Adoma, is [quoted](#) as saying, "Ellis inspired many black LGBTQ people to be themselves," and said that Ellis felt, "Because oftentimes when these youth come out to say their parents, their relatives, and loved ones, the family might not necessarily be accepting and, in fact, might be rejecting."

Although Ellis passed away on October 5, 2000, at 101 years old, her legacy lives on within the Ruth Ellis Center co-founded by Adoma in 1999. The Ruth Ellis Center is dedicated to helping homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults. Their mission is to "create opportunities with LGBTQ+ young people to build their vision for a positive future." The center provides a variety of community outreach services for homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults. Some services include primary and behavioral health appointments; a drop-in center with a computer lab and free printing; free laundry and food to go with support from individual case managers. Ruth's House is an Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU) and is a part of the center. It holds 9 beds for youth under the guardianship of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and who specifically identify as LGBTQ+. Youth under the guardianship of the Michigan DHHS are identified under the agency's child abuse/neglect or juvenile justice divisions, and Ruth's House assists in developing practical coping skills to aid youth in transitioning into successful adult lives.

The result of Ellis living her truth and her work supporting LGBTQ youth lives on through community action. You can learn more about Ruth Ellis in her documentary, "Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @100" and by visiting [Ruth Ellis Center](#).



February 2022

RUTH
Ellis
LGBTQ+ rights activist

IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH,
WE CELEBRATE MANY OF OUR BLACK LGBTQ+
HEROES, ICONS, AND TRAILBLAZERS.



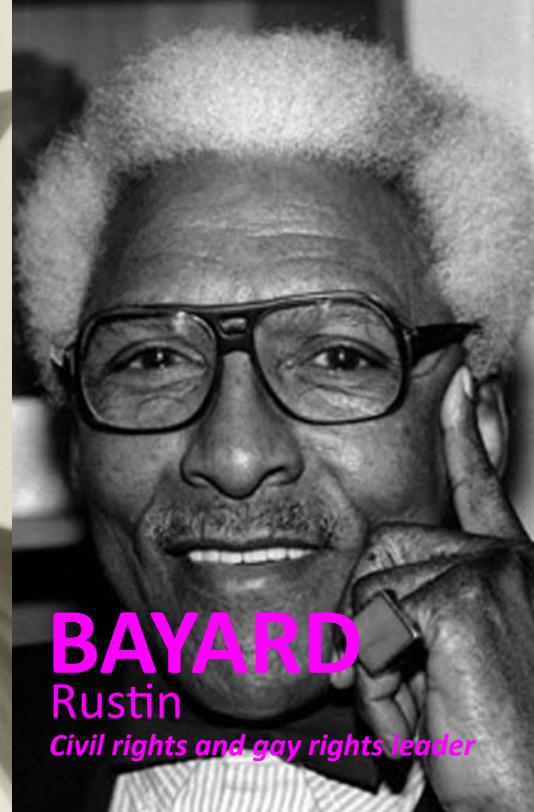
MA
Rainey
Blues singer, recording artist



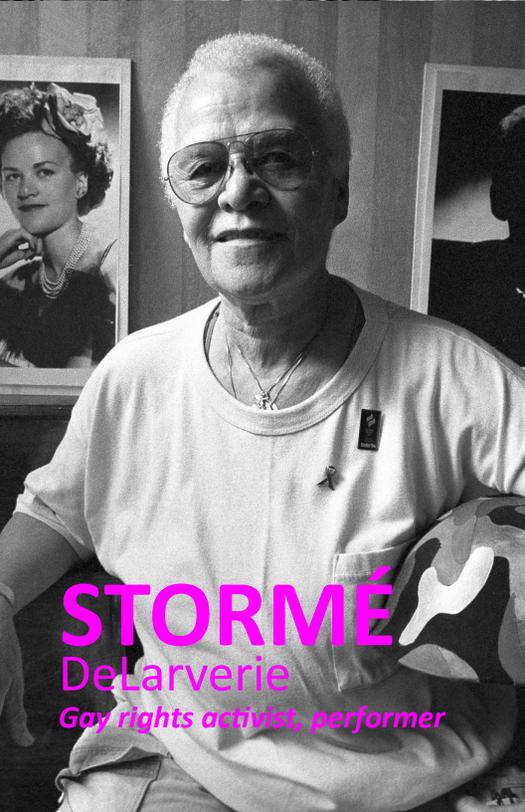
ETHEL
Waters
Jazz singer, actress



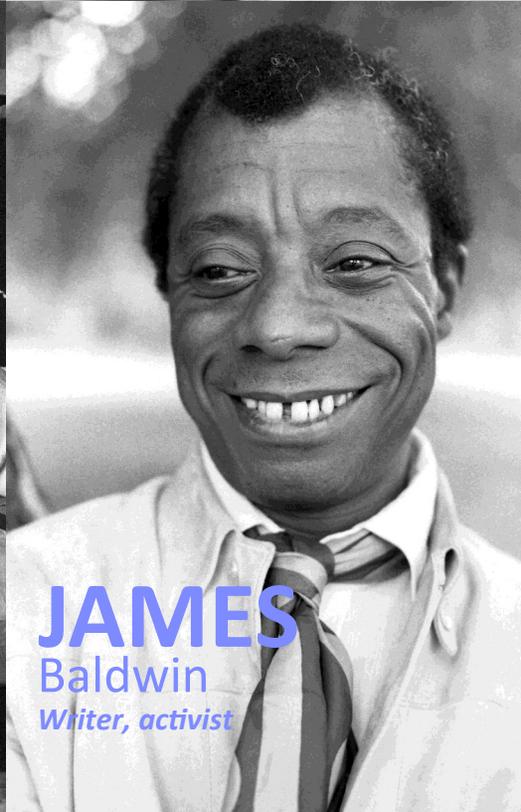
GLADYS
Bentley
Blues singer, pianist, entertainer



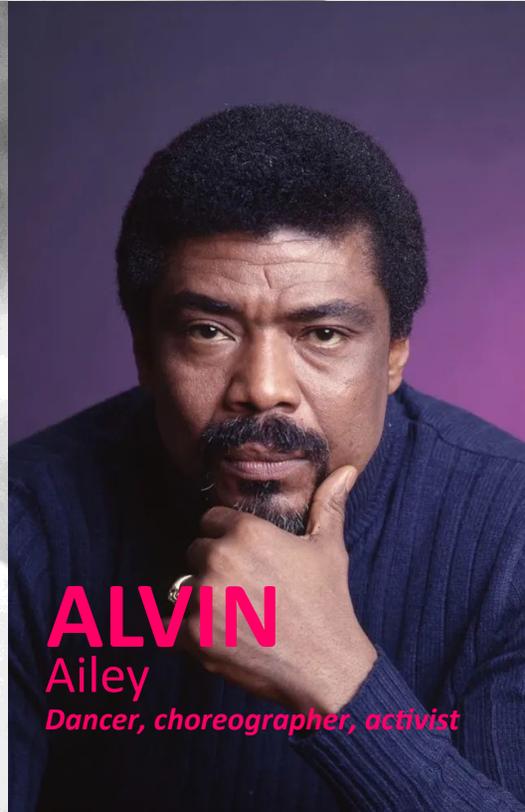
BAYARD
Rustin
Civil rights and gay rights leader



STORMÉ
DeLarverie
Gay rights activist, performer



JAMES
Baldwin
Writer, activist



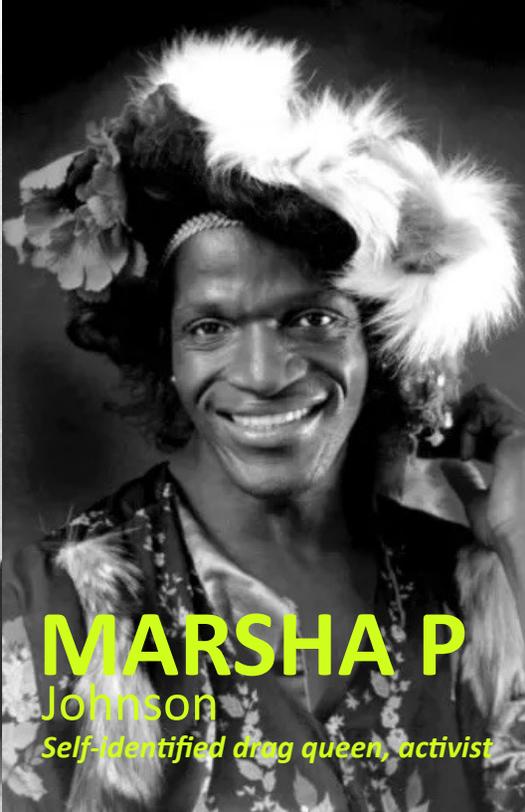
ALVIN
Ailey
Dancer, choreographer, activist



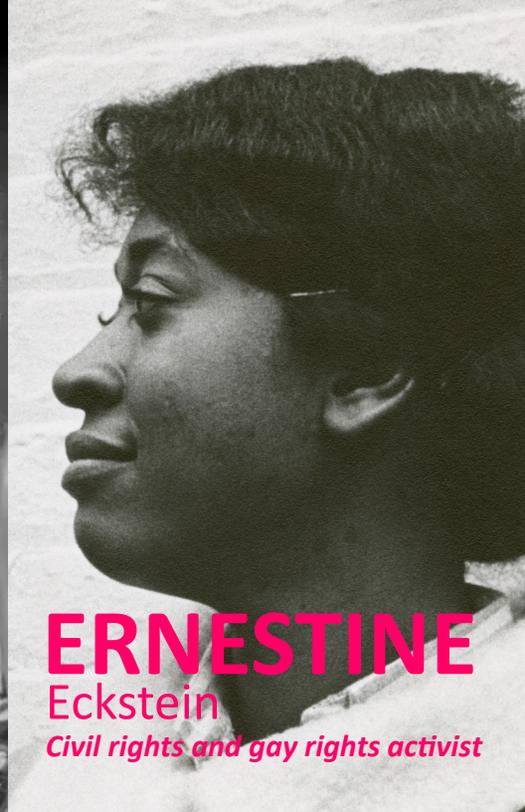
AUDRE
Lorde
Writer, civil rights activist



BARBARA
Jordan
Lawyer, educator, politician



MARSHA P
Johnson
Self-identified drag queen, activist



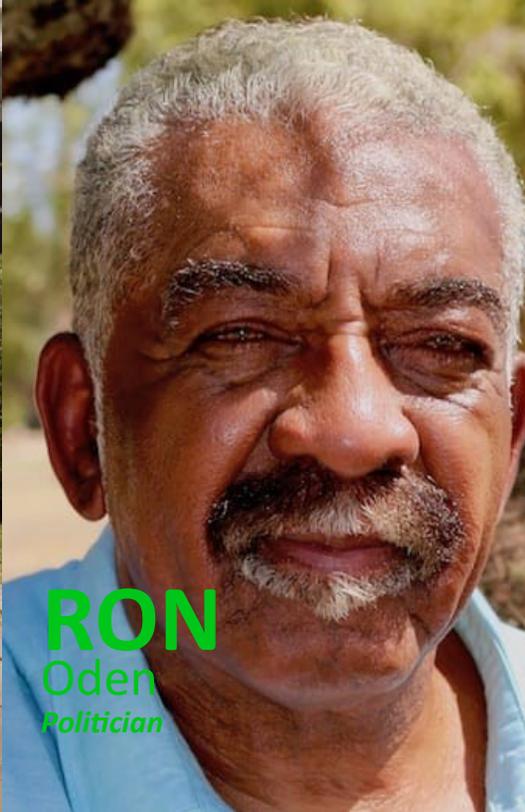
ERNESTINE
Eckstein
Civil rights and gay rights activist



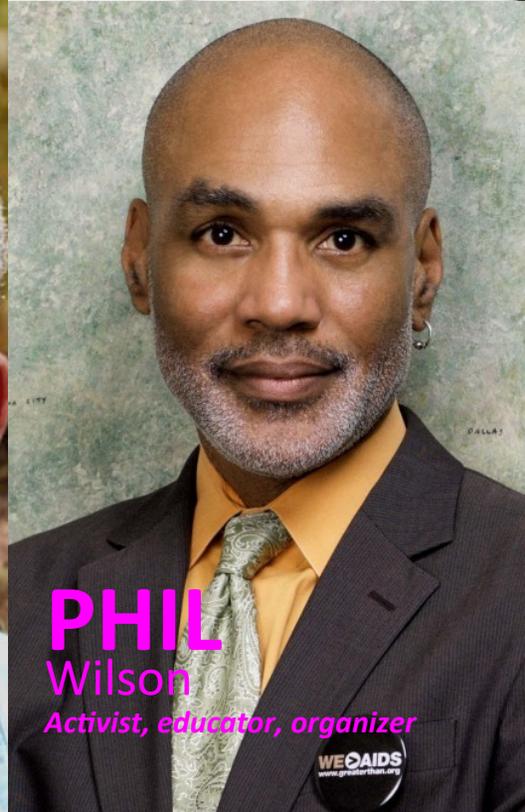
BARBARA
Smith
Scholar, activist, author



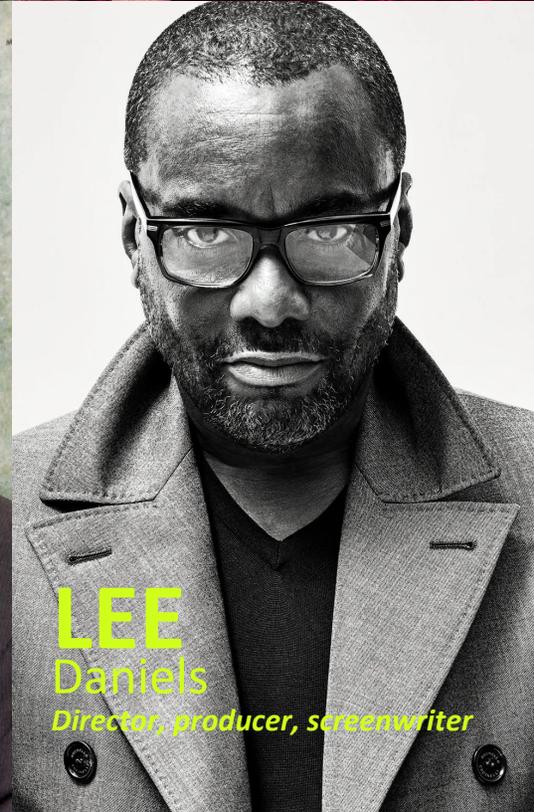
ANDRÉ
Leon Talley
Fashion journalist, stylist, editor



RON
Oden
Politician



PHIL
Wilson
Activist, educator, organizer



LEE
Daniels
Director, producer, screenwriter



“We can make a difference by standing strong and being united with the people who believe in us, who advocate for us, who support and love us for who we are.”

MISS MAJOR
Griffin-Gracy
Trans community leader, activist



ROBIN
Roberts
Television broadcaster



WILLI
Ninja
Dancer, choreographer



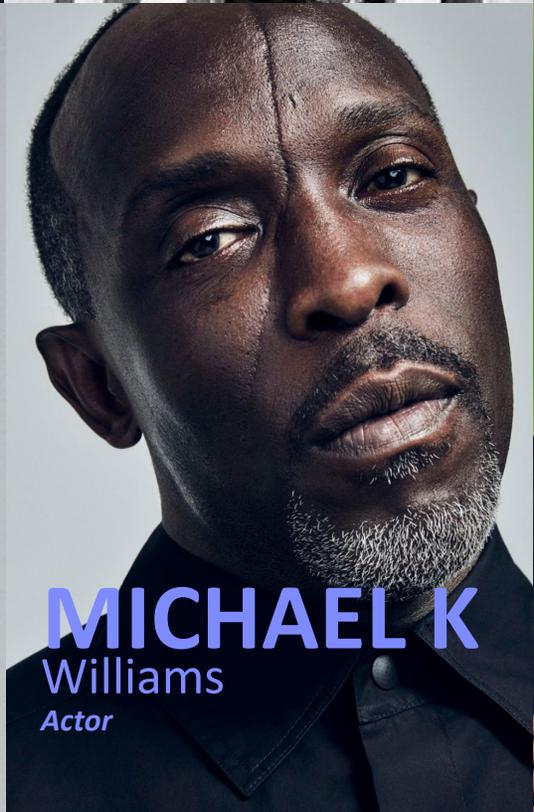
ANDREA
Jenkins
Politician, writer, poet, activist



LORI
Lightfoot
Attorney, politician



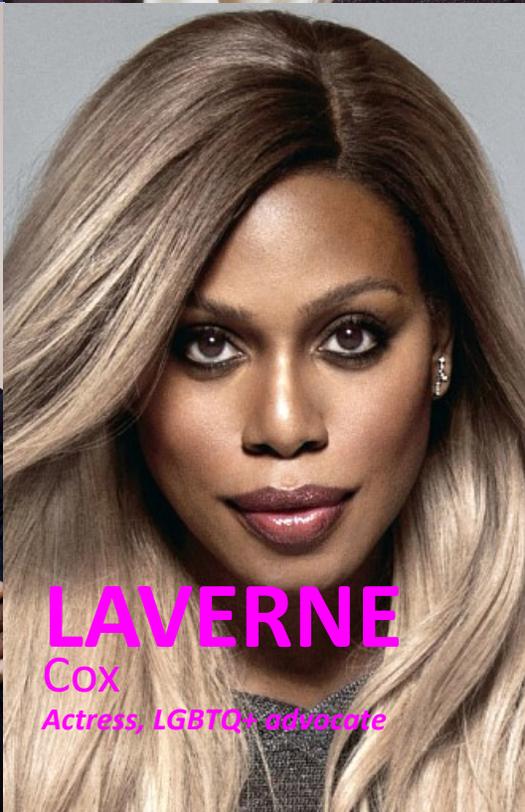
WANDA
Sykes
Actress, comedian, writer



MICHAEL K
Williams
Actor



ALPHONSO
David
Lawyer, LGBTQ+ civil rights activist



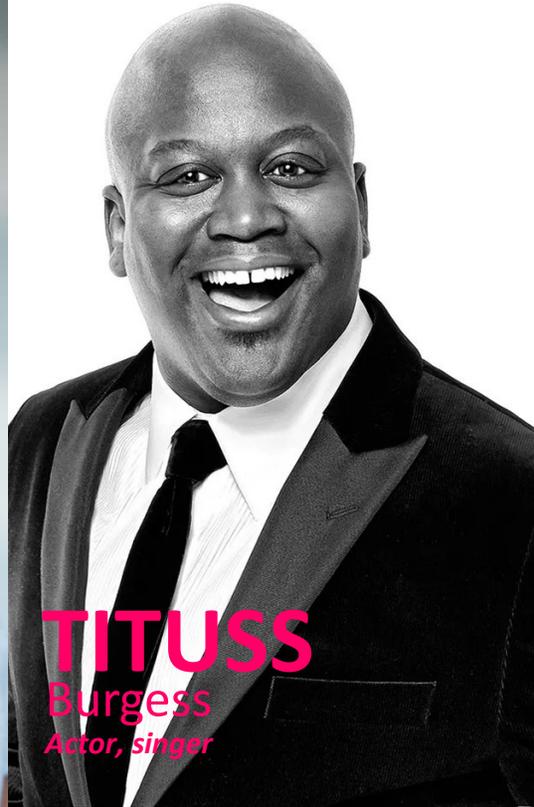
LAVERNE
Cox
Actress, LGBTQ+ advocate



KARINE

Jean-Pierre

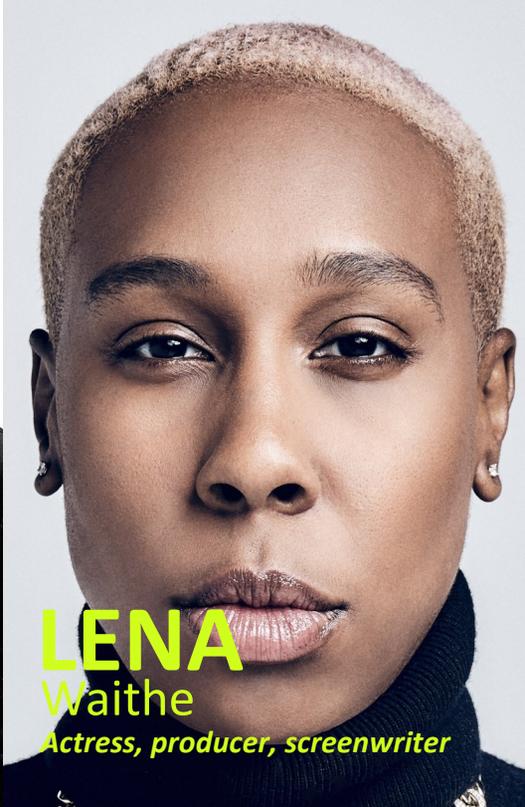
Political organizer, activist, author



TITUSS

Burgess

Actor, singer



LENA

Waithe

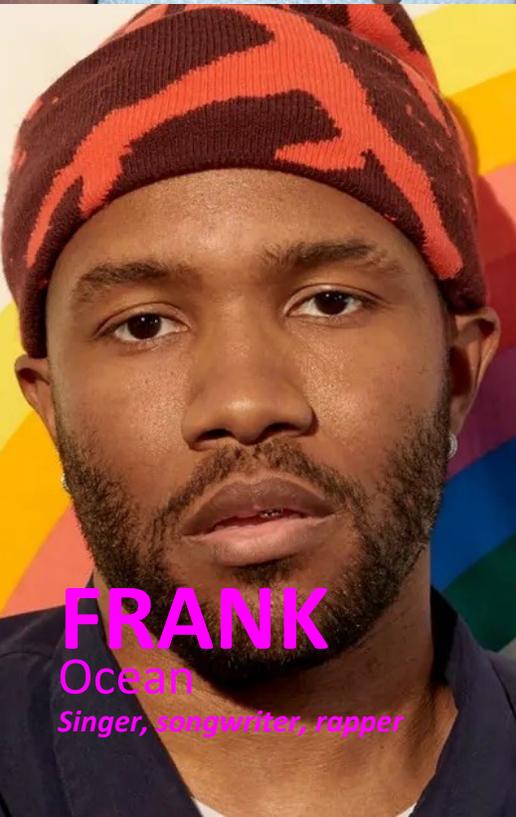
Actress, producer, screenwriter



JANELLE

Monáe

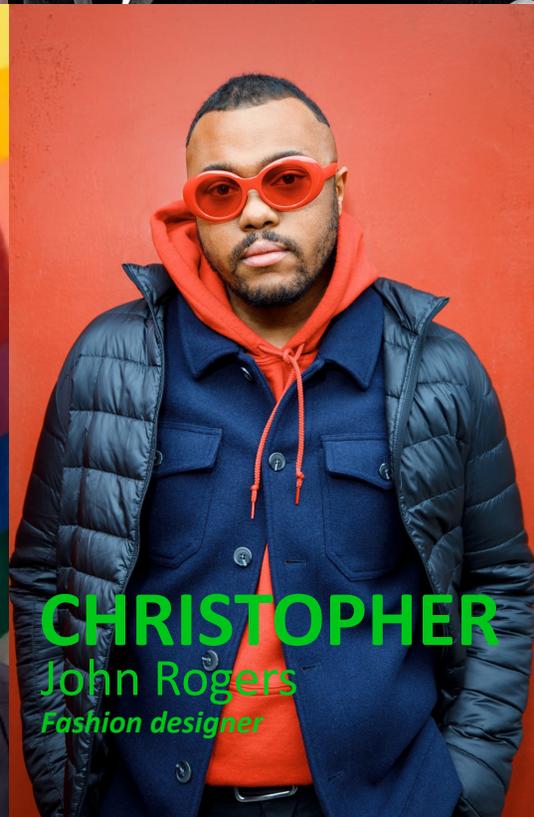
Singer, rapper, actress



FRANK

Ocean

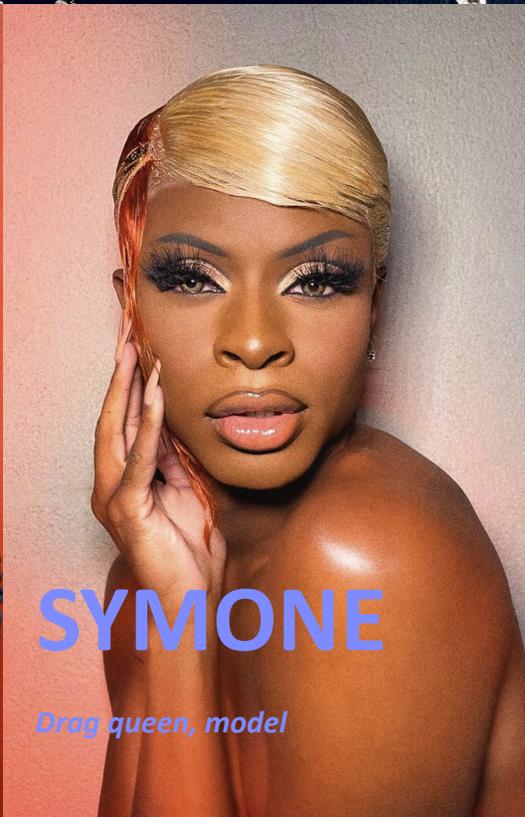
Singer, songwriter, rapper



CHRISTOPHER

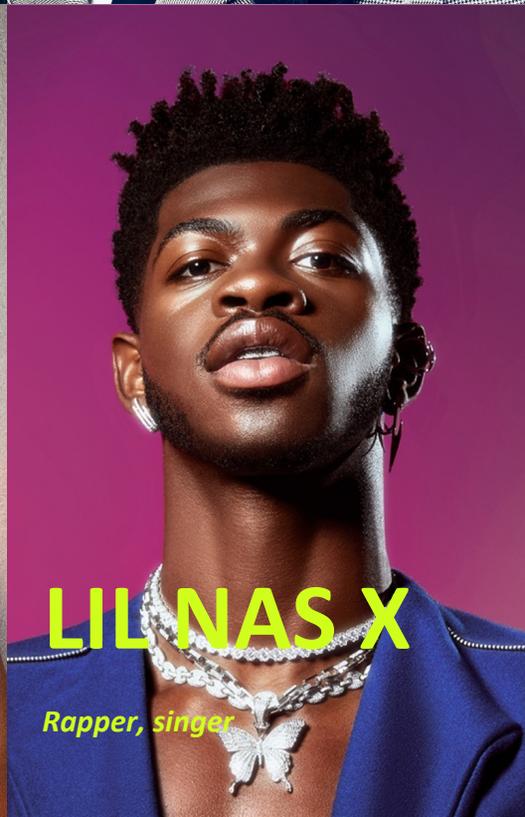
John Rogers

Fashion designer



SYMONE

Drag queen, model



LIL NAS X

Rapper, singer

Dr. Marcus Anthony Hunter

AN INTERVIEW

by Masozi Nyirenda (she/her), DES

“*Black knowledge is Power!*” That is a phrase Dr. Marcus Anthony Hunter often uses and lives by as evidenced by his Twitter profile that states, “...he is a lover of all things Black”, and the inspiration for his books.

Dr. Hunter is the Scott Waugh Endowed Chair in the Division of the Social Sciences, Professor of sociology and African American Studies at UCLA. He coined the phrase **#BlackLivesMatter**, and is the author of three books. Along with being an accomplished educator and author, he is also an activist who is co-founder of the U.S. Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Movement.

RAIN had the chance to speak to him about his books and how he feels is the best way for our communities to move forward with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work for both the Black and LGBTQIA+ communities.

How many books have you written?

I have written four books beginning with *Black Citymakers: How The Philadelphia Negro Changed Urban America* (Oxford University Press, 2013), *Chocolate Cities: The Black Map of American Life* (University of California Press, 2018) co-authored with Zandria F. Robinson, and *The New Black Sociologists* (Routledge, 2018). My fourth and new book, *Radical Reparations* will be released later this year (HarperCollins/Amistad, Fall 2022).

The subject content in your books often centers around your love for all things Black, especially Black history and people. How have your books made an impact?

Each one has its own influence, but my first book (*Black Citymakers*) discusses one of the oldest Black neighborhoods in the U.S., the Black Seventh Ward in Philadelphia. That book has been used to garner grants for Black community organizations. It has also influenced gentrification policies in terms of urban planning and development in Philadelphia by being race-conscious as opposed to race-neutral with the goal of bettering the lives of its Black residents. As for *Chocolate Cities*, this book resonated beyond the sociology community. We purposely sought out to write a book that would connect with lovers of music, film, and television. As such, this book has inspired academics to refer to Black communities in a more positive way with the term “Chocolate Cities” as opposed to ghettos or slums.

You have spent time in Seattle, Washington for personal and professional reasons. Can you explain your interest in this area?

Seattle is very fascinating because at one point it served as a proxy for the United States in terms of actual Black population. For about a decade (1980-1990), the Black population in Seattle mirrored the Black population of the entire country. Furthermore, because there is a higher concentration of Blacks in Washington who live in or around King and Pierce Counties, these areas provide good research materials in studying the shifts in America. I see myself coming back to Seattle to do more research around the urban area, especially as the tech industry continues to grow. For example, Microsoft, Starbucks, Amazon, and other multinational corporations are converging and establishing headquarters in Seattle. But at the same time, we are seeing the Black population in this area decline. This trend is a good indicator as to what we can see other Black people in America go through. On a personal note, and as a music connoisseur, I am attracted to Seattle because it is home to Jimi Hendrix and Quincy Jones, who are major pop culture producers.

What is the inspiration behind your new book, Radical Reparations?

When people hear or see the word reparations, it becomes a very divisive topic and is portrayed negatively. One of my goals is to broaden people's understanding of reparations and to help eliminate some of the barriers that have occurred around it. What I hope to explain in my book is that any requests, demands or history about reparations is an effort to hold the U.S. government accountable. After all, it was the government that initially sanctioned, constitutionalized, and legalized the practice of slavery. As such, white people and families that came to the U.S. long after slavery was abolished need to be aware that our government is responsible for these atrocities and crimes against humanity because it was the government that permitted it to happen. Therefore, there also needs to be a shift in thought centering on individual blame to hold the government accountable. Also, in this book, I want to readers to know there is more than one type of reparations besides money or financial

repair. I discuss seven other types of reparations including political, intellectual, legal, economic, spiritual, spatial, and social.

Nowadays, there has been a lot of discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). What do you think needs to happen to push this movement forward?

We need systems to counterbalance the historical and systemic racism and inequalities we have in place. I think to move forward with DEI, we should be concentrating on dismantling these systems by putting in place systemic equities. For example, after the abolishment of slavery, there was no effort to make a systemic enfranchisement to repair the damages of slavery. Therefore, there is a strong need for global, national, regional, and local systems of equity that include systems, systemic shared values, and dignity. As such, I would like to see more of a systemic inclusion model moving forward, including seeing organizations and agencies stating they are a place that believes and advocates for "Systemic DEI."

You are a friend and colleague with Kimberlé Crenshaw, the American civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory who coined the term 'intersectionality'. You are also part of the Black and LGBTQIA+ communities. How do you feel about your role in these two communities in terms of how they operate for or against one another?

This is a topic I wrote about in one of my earliest articles, 'All the Gays are White and All the Blacks Are Straight: Black Gay Males, Identity and Community' (2010). Fast forward to 2022 and we are still having the same discussion, and the premise behind the article has not changed. That is because, within both communities, there is still a lack of awareness and acceptance that Blacks are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. For example, within some Black communities, sexuality is seen as a key area for division and a source of tension. But this is also happening within the LGBTQIA+ community, where there needs to be a clear understanding of how racism is a critical component and divider.



LIVING WITH A PANDEMIC

Mental health concerns and what's recommended

by Tracey Carlos (she/her), LGBTQ

After three years, most of us are aware the pandemic has placed a lot of mental stress on the majority of people. Between losses we have suffered — whether it be the loss of a loved one, social interactions, employment, or numerous other things, we've all dealt with some loss. So what ways can we improve our mental health while we wait to see what the world will look like on the other side of this pandemic? Are there ways to cope?

The New York Times surveyed 1,320 mental health professionals how their patients are coping at a time when they are experiencing more demand for therapy than ever before. The study found that while depression and anxiety were the most common concerns, family, relationship, and suicidal thoughts were dominating many therapy session conversations.

The [survey](#) found that demand is high for therapy, waiting lists are longer than usual for 75% of respondents, 60% found more patients were seeking medication, about 13% of respondents specifically work with children and found that mental health issues have intensified in youth. One in seven respondents found that racial justice issues were a top reason for clients seeking therapy. 75% found that much of their time with clients was working on issues for couples and unfortunately without being asked, about 10% of respondents raised the issue of being burned out, on their own.

In October 2021, a *Medical News Today* [study](#) found that 32% of adults struggled to make basic decisions, such as what to wear, due to COVID-19-induced stress. This has been called “decision fatigue”. Decision fatigue is when a person's ability to make decisions declines after making several big decisions at once. For example, having to figure out if your child should continue in school, if you can work from home, how to use new technologies to work at home, and who it is safe to spend time with. Decisions like these were all thrown at many of us in a short amount of time. People simply run out of energy to make decisions. Luckily, in this article, some suggestions were given on how to cope.

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Dr. Grant Pignatiello, an instructor and clinical research scholar at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, gave three suggestions to help with decision fatigue:

1. Eliminate the mundane decisions such as what to wear or what to eat, by planning out your week in advance and creating a routine.
2. Be compassionate to yourself. If you need it, take that nap, watch that TV show, read your book. Replenishing your energy is important.
3. Make sure you get enough sleep, exercise, eat healthy and find healthy outlets for stress.

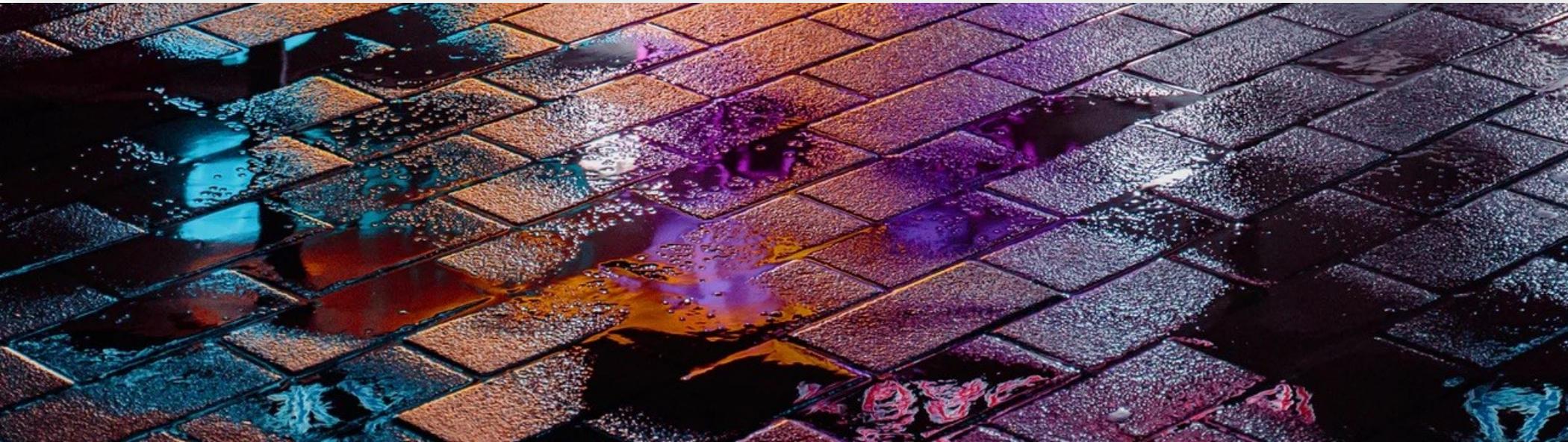
Dr. Gustav Tinghög, an associate professor at Linköping University in Sweden added this - “Let someone you know and trust, check your thinking. Having someone else you can deliberate with, relieves some of the anxiety of decision making. Don’t be paralyzed by the fear of making the wrong decision. Good enough decisions are good enough. Perfection is not necessary for every decision. Regularly review your past decisions for cases of poor decision making and try to understand why it happened. This way you can learn from how decision fatigue may be affecting you”.

[More help](#), particularly for youth, was given by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). While they agree there is harmful mental effects caused by the pandemic, there are ways to avoid them.

“Early adolescence is a time when youth are already experiencing rapid change physically, emotionally, and socially, and the COVID-19 pandemic has caused immense disruption to this sensitive stage in life,” said Nora D. Volkow, M.D., director of NIDA. “This study helps us understand how modifiable lifestyle factors affect the mental health and well-being of adolescents, and it can inform the development of interventions to protect youth during a major life stress. This is important now, as we continue to grapple with the pandemic, and also in future crisis response at the local or national level.”

NIH studied several different factors and found that the best things for children ages 11-14, was talking about plans for the upcoming day with their parents, participating in family activities, physical activities, and better sleep. These were found to be protective against stress, anxiety and depression. Conversely, more screen time and witnessing racism or discrimination in relation to COVID-19 were important predictors of more negative effects. In addition, girls who already had some mental health or sleep problems were particularly vulnerable.

We have a long way to go before this pandemic will be behind us. Until then - we should remain aware of our own mental health and not be ashamed to admit when we need help. Being kind to yourself never hurts either.



MY NAME IS Sam



by Sam Simiskey, ESD

Hi Everyone! My name is Sam. I'm fairly new to Washington, originally from Utah. I enjoy hiking, reading, and helping others. My family is my boyfriend and my three-legged dog, Charlie. I work hard at my job in the Tax and Wage division for the Employment Security Department, and I really love what I do. I also have a few medical conditions. One of which is called 21-Hydroxylase-Deficient Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. That's a bunch of big words just to say that I was born intersex.

For me, being intersex has been a difficult journey. Even writing this article is a risk, really. I have lost friends, been abused, kicked out of homes and schools, and fired from jobs for being honest about who I am and how I was born. I even had an invasive surgery forced upon me at three years old because of it. Some of these events are really common for those of us in the intersex community. Some of them are not.

I can't speak for the entire community at large, but what I can do is share my experiences and thoughts as a part of it. Intersex is a semi-broad spectrum of different physical aspects of sex. It can cover anything from a mix of internal or external reproductive organs, genetic sex markers-for both male or female, and it can be used to refer to not having any of these organs or markers at all. Because of the often, very obvious physical identifiers of intersexuality, societies around the world have had at least a surface knowledge and understanding of the concept for a very, very long time. So why is it so uncommon to hear of an intersex person, even in the pride community? Shame.

With the push of cis-gendered and heteronormative agendas, children who are born in this "strange" in-between or outlier of physical features, are taught that they are different, gross, or they have to be "fixed" to be normal. Some become medical case studies. Examined by an onslaught of medical professionals to learn about the different variations of sex development. Any spotlight on the nature of their differences is either layered with societal disgust and outrage, or placed into a spotlight similar to the freak shows of the not-so-distant past. There are a few organizations in place trying to fight for intersex rights not to be mutilated or otherwise traumatized, but these are few and far between. When a spotlight on someone provides such a negative result, coming forward about that aspect of one's life can be a terrifying and traumatizing endeavor. Especially when trying to advocate for one's self.

I have recently written a research paper that goes into depth about some common traumas that many intersex folks experience. Now available on the [LGBTQ+ Commission website](#). I'm very grateful to the pride resource groups here in Washington State for encouraging me and others like me, to bring our full, authentic selves to work, and for allowing me the chance to share something for which I have so much passion.

RAIN MEMBER Spotlight

What's your name (the name you prefer!) and what are your pronouns?

My name is Jacob Towle (pictured on the right) and my pronouns are he/him.



How long have you been a Washington State employee and what do you do?

30 years as of March 2021. I am currently an Administrator for DSHS' Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Where did you grow up?

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Spokane, WA.

We know you are retiring soon – tell us about that! Any post-retirement plans?

After incredible experiences working with the state of Washington's Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (25 years) and equally incredible experiences with Adult Protective Services, Foster Home Licensing, and DDA, I am making the leap from a career in government to new adventures in the private sector, and my husband and I plan to do some traveling, post-pandemic.

How long have you been involved with RAIN and what interested you initially?

I've been with RAIN and the Safe Place Subcommittee for two years. Initially RAIN caught my interest because of the mission to create safe and inclusive workplaces where every LGBTQ+ employee can bring their full authentic self to work, and that the BRG will provide resources and support to employees and stakeholders. The RAIN membership and leadership have made a very positive impact on my life.

Have you held a RAIN leadership position?

My participation as the Safe Place Subcommittee co-chair has been awesome! If post-retirement allows, I would like to continue to be involved with RAIN in some capacity.

Why do you think RAIN is important to LGBTQIA+ employees?

It is a very impactful, on-going support and discussion surrounding employees being able to bring their full authentic self to work, positively permeates through so many agencies and has a positive and affirming influence in Washington communities.

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Plus, the connection with Manny and the LGBTQ+ commissioners only enhances the positive impact. I am deeply thankful to the RAIN leadership and advisory committee for the hard work and dedication.

What's your community like? Family, friends, whoever YOU consider your community!

My community includes my husband, our pup Jasper, two sisters and two brothers and their families, me mum, and a small group of friends that have been family for more than 40 years.

What are your hobbies?

Skiing (water and snow), swimming (I competed in the 2006 FINA World Masters Swimming Championships at Stanford University), Jasper taking Nate and I for walks, Sci-Fi movies, and traveling to places I have never been.

Favorite food, movie or TV show?

Anything that my talented husband makes; his Pumpkin Crunch Cake is magical and his hand-made pasta dishes are divine. As for TV, 2004-2009 Battle Star Galactica series (yes, I'm such a nerd!); incredibly well-written scripts, amazing cutting-edge special effects, and complex performances from the cast.

If you could visit a place you have never been, where would it be?

Greece's beautiful port city on the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea, Thessaloniki, (also known as Thessalonica or Salonica), and the island of Mykonos, very LGBTQ+ friendly.

If you had the power to change one thing about the world, what would it be and why?

The divisiveness in our country. We could get so much done if our society would just stop bickering and focusing on the power and money grabs and concentrate on peaceful prosperity and societal advancement.

What else should we know about you?

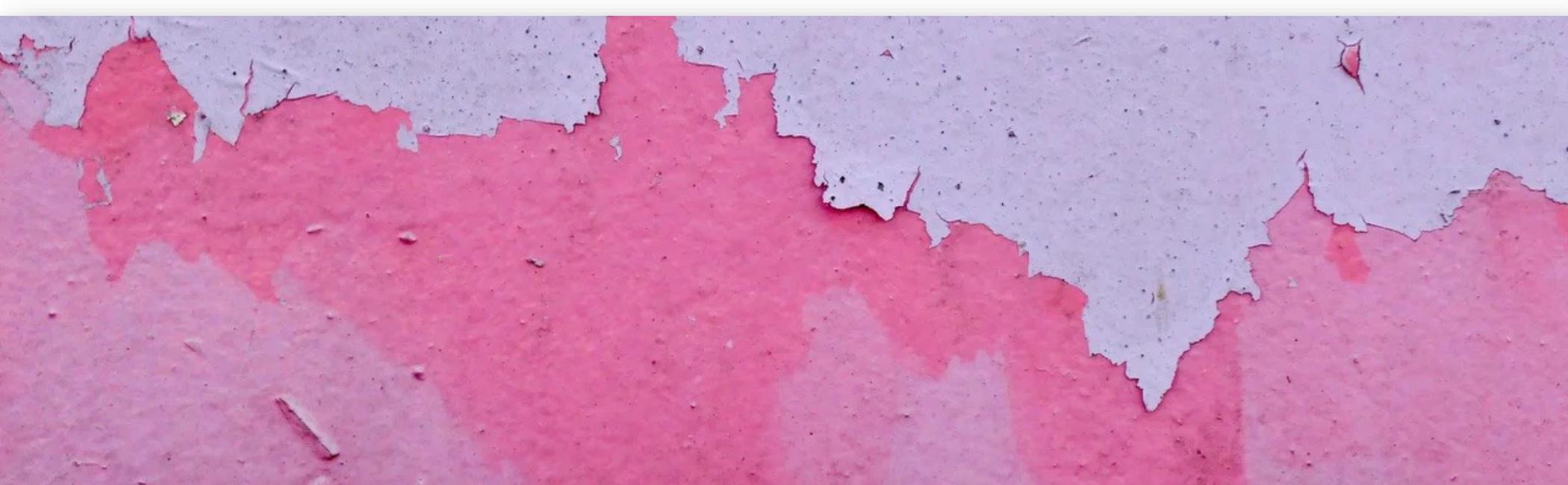
One of my greatest joys was helping to raise my amazing nephew who was born with developmental disabilities and a seizure disorder; he loved listening to music and going to concerts, including symphonies and outdoor festivals, and swimming.

What message do you have for people reading this?

Be you. Love life. As one of my all-time favorite people Katharine Hepburn said, "If you obey all of the rules, you miss all of the fun." And, "Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get, only with what you are expecting to give, which is everything."

We want to provide a deeper dive into the unique lives and skill sets of our members all across Washington State.

If you want to nominate someone to be featured in the spotlight, please email RAIN@ofm.wa.gov.



The Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) is an LGBTQ+ and ally

Business Resource Group

committed to diversity and inclusion efforts that allow staff to bring their full authentic selves to work in order to do their best work on behalf of Washingtonians.



Questions or feedback
RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

Visit our website

[LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN](https://www.lgbtq.wa.gov/RAIN)

